Possibly it may help your memory if I remind you about the sugar ships which were brought to one point in the Atlantic and

Shipping Controllers sunk one after the other until (I

than one week's supply* of sugar in the country.[5]

There were occasions when a ship reached this zone at a point where a naval ship was expected to be awaiting them in order to indicate the exact route, but there was no guiding warship to be found. These were the "floating intelligence centres" alluded to by Sir John Jellicoe at the War Committee. The "centres" were often floating elsewhere than at the point where they were needed, so the "intelligence" was not available* Sometimes wireless messages were sent by perplexed ships asking for directions. These messages were picked up and decoded by the Germans, so that when the poor merchantmen arrived at the point indicated in the wired orders, they found not a guide, but a pirate awaiting their arrival.

In fact, by this egregious plan our ships were in effect often shepherded into the abattoir where the slaughterers lay in wait for them.

Looking back, it seems amazing that the system of escorting our ships in convoys was not adopted earlier. Yet in the teeth of the fact that other methods were proving futile and disastrous, and our

sinkings were increasing at an alarming rate, the Admiralty stubbornly refused to consider adopting the convoy system and thus extending to the mercantile marine the same guardianship as that upon which they relied for their own safety in the Grand Fleet.

Several considerations influenced their judgment.